Subcommittee on National Security, Emerging Threats, and International Relations

United States House of Representatives

Committee on Government Reform

Combating Terrorism
Training and Equipping Reserve Component Forces

Testimony of

Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr.

Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments

May 11, 2004

Introduction

> *"This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins—war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him . . . . It requires in those situations where we must counter it . . . . a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force, and therefore a new and* ***wholly different kind of military training."*** *(emphasis added)*
>
> John F. Kennedy

These words were spoken by President Kennedy as he addressed the graduating class at West Point in June, 1962. Forty years later, they sum up the challenge facing today's military in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq, and highlight the interrelationship between strategy, force structure, and training. If anything, the challenge is far more formidable today than it was in Vietnam.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, it is an honor to appear before you today to offer my thoughts on the timely and important issue of "Combating Terrorism: Training and Equipping Reserve Component Forces." My expertise on the specific details of our training efforts to prepare our troops for deployment to Afghanistan and Iraq is far from comprehensive. Consequently, I will focus my comments on placing the training issue—both for the Active and Reserve Components—within the larger context of our military operations in these countries.

What Kind of War?

The US military's doctrine, force structure and training infrastructure are oriented primarily on large-scale conventional military operations. However, our military has been so successful in fielding forces capable of waging conventional war that adversaries are, for the present, dissuaded from confronting the United States in that manner. Instead, they are seeking shelter at

the extreme ends of the conflict spectrum. At the high end, hostile states like North Korea and Iran are rushing to develop nuclear capabilities, while at the lower end hostile groups such as al Qaeda, the Taliban, remnants of Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist regime, splinter Iraqi Shi'ia elements and similar groups pursue, insurgency warfare.

An insurgency is a protracted struggle conducted, at least initially, from a position of great military weakness, whose objective is to overthrow the existing order. Insurgencies typically comprise three phases: first, insurgent agitation and proselytization among the mass populace—the phase of contention; second, overt violence, guerrilla operations, and the establishment of sanctuaries—the equilibrium phase; and third, open warfare between insurgent and government forces designed to topple the existing regime—the counteroffensive phase. Today in Afghanistan and Iraq, US forces are encountering insurgent movements that are a mix of Phase I and Phase II operations. American forces must train for both, as well as for the prospect of countering the insurgents in Phase III operations.

There is an important distinction to be made between insurgent movements that are being principally countered by indigenous government forces, and those that primarily confront the forces of an external power. The latter, of course, is the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the former country, US/NATO forces predominate; while in the latter, US/Coalition forces shoulder most of the burden. This is important because it becomes possible for the insurgents to win in a different way—by draining the will of the foreign powers to the point where they abandon an infant regime before it is capable of standing on its own and defending itself. In a democracy such as the United States, this translates to eroding popular support for the war.

Thus, in an insurgency, the principal target of both insurgent and counterinsurgent forces is not the enemy's military force; rather, in Afghanistan and Iraq, the center of gravity is the population—both the indigenous population and public opinion on America's home front. The insurgents cannot hope to defeat US military forces in open battle (i.e., by moving to Phase III of the insurgency). American forces cannot be militarily forced out of these countries. However, the insurgents are relying on the active cooperation or passive acceptance of the vast majority of the indigenous population to sustain them. If they can achieve this, they can avoid defeat. Even

though they are far weaker than the forces that oppose them, by simply not losing—by "staying in the game"—over a protracted period, the insurgents hope to win by convincing the American public and its leaders that the war is not worth the cost in blood and treasure.

While the United States does not confront a unified, coherent enemy in either Afghanistan or Iraq, as it did in Vietnam, insurgent elements do seem to be pursuing traditional insurgent strategies and tactics. Since the insurgents are too weak to challenge coalition forces openly, they pursue an indirect approach, the target of which is the population. If the insurgents can gain control over the population through fear, popular appeal, or, more likely, a mixture of both, their chances of surviving, and winning, improve dramatically.

As T.E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") noted, "rebellions can be made by two percent active in a striking force, and 98 percent passively sympathetic." Access to the population, and (if possible) control over the population enables the insurgents to deny critical intelligence to coalition forces. After all, if the coalition forces know who and where the insurgents are, they have more than enough military capability to engage and defeat them. Insurgent access to the population also enables them to recruit new members to their cause, as well as to appropriate food, medicine and other supplies. Correspondingly, the inability of the governments in Kabul and Baghdad to exercise control over their population will sap away at their strength, denying them replacements for the armed forces, making taxes difficult or impossible to collect, and drying up sources of badly needed intelligence.

Thus US and coalition forces find themselves engaged in stability operations designed to win the "hearts and minds" of the Afghan and Iraqi population. To date, the majority of US Soldiers and Marines killed and wounded in these operations have been victims of gunfire, rocket and mortar attack, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Improvised rocket launchers are being used to attack fixed targets, like buildings. Roadside bombs (e.g., IEDs) are employed to slow convoys, making them vulnerable to other forms of attack, such as suicide bombers or guerrilla assaults.

Foreign fighters are infiltrating Iraq, either working in separate cells or teaming up with local insurgent elements. Attacks there are becoming more coordinated and sophisticated, possibly due

to the leadership of these foreign elements. The enemy has shown the ability to stand and fight, rather than merely to "shoot and scoot." Although the insurgents apparently lack a unified command, they are showing the discipline to operate in groups of 20-40 fighters. Recent uprisings in cities like Fallujah and Najaf witnessed insurgent groups massing in substantially larger numbers, although at this point their command element's ability to coordinate large force groupings appears problematic. The shifts in the scale and form of insurgent attacks could have important implications for training.

Having said that, it should be noted that the tactics employed by the various insurgent movements with which coalition forces must contend are, in most cases, not new. Suicide bombers are hardly novel; nor are car and truck bombs a recent phenomenon.[1] Attacks on convoys in Iraq, which are increasing, again reflect nothing new in insurgency warfare.

As for IEDs, American forces have seen them before as well. For example, owing to the US military's emphasis on firepower, in Vietnam in 1966, over 27,000 tons of unexploded ordnance (artillery shells that were fired or bombs dropped by aircraft), or "duds" were generated. The Viet Cong proved expert at converting these duds into mines and booby traps—their version of IEDs. Over 1,000 US soldiers died that year from these weapons. During the first six months of 1967 the problem worsened, as 17 percent of all US casualties (539 killed and 5,532 wounded) were caused by these devices.

Insurgents in both Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated a willingness to target noncombatants, including their own people. Again, this is nothing new. Indeed, when in doubt as to their ability to win the "hearts" of the people, insurgents have often used intimidation and terror to win their "minds," and thereby gain their unwilling cooperation, or passivity.

[1] Consider, for example, the attack on the US Marine Corps barracks in Beirut over two decades ago, and the Khobar Towers attack on US forces in 1996.

The Challenge for the US Military

"No More Vietnams"

This raises the question: If the insurgents are not employing dramatically different strategies or tactics, why is the US military so challenged by them? One reason is that both the Army and Marine Corps' skills in this form of warfare have atrophied over the last 30 years.

In the wake of the United States' traumatic experience in fighting communist insurgents in Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, there emerged a strong desire among the American people, their political leaders, and the military itself to avoid involvement in such conflicts in the future. The phrase "No More Vietnams" proved a comfortable fit for the American people and its military. Even before US involvement in Vietnam ended, President Nixon set forth the Nixon Doctrine, which called for the United States to support friendly regional powers opposing insurgent forces, but not to plan on deploying US combat troops to assist them.

With the 1980s came the Weinberger and Powell Doctrines. They essentially advocated applying overwhelming US force to defeat the enemy promptly, and to facilitate rapid US disengagement. When the Marine Corps barracks in Beirut was attacked, the US quickly withdrew its forces from Lebanon. Where US advisors were involved in counterinsurgency operations, as in El Salvador, strict limits were place on their numbers. The pattern persisted through the 1990s. When US troops were dispatched to conduct peacekeeping operations in Haiti, Somalia, and the Balkans, there were demands for "exit strategies," lest American forces become bogged down in a Vietnam-like quagmire.

Benign Doctrinal Neglect

It is, therefore, not surprising that the US military's focus on counterinsurgency warfare declined, with predictable consequences for doctrine, force structure and training. Following Vietnam, Army doctrinal efforts again focused overwhelmingly on conventional warfare. Even after the Soviet Union's collapse and its deployments during the 1990s to a series of low-intensity conflicts, the Army's operational concepts for its Future Force marginalized

counterinsurgency. The consequences of this for training are clear. The Army and Marine Corps emphasize training in accordance with their doctrine. If the doctrine accords low priority to counterinsurgency operations, training in the skills associated with this kind of warfare is likely to be marginalized, as it has been.

Force Restructuring

The Army's force structure also reflects the admonitions of the nation's political leadership over the ast three decades. Truth be told, it also reflects the Service's own preference to avoid creating forces for large-scale, protracted counterinsurgency operations, and instead to focus on what it does best: conduct highly complex, highly integrated, combined arms operations against a conventional adversary in mid-intensity conflicts.[2] The assumption that such forces could address insurgency warfare as a "lesser included case" of conventional military operations has not held in Afghanistan or Iraq, just as it did not hold in Vietnam.

The Active and Reserve Components, while not structurally identical, do bear a substantial resemblance. With respect to both the AC and RC, the Army finds itself not only having to regenerate certain skills (e.g., convoy security) that have been accorded low priority over time, but also to reclassify a significant portion of its Soldiers to field sufficient forces to conduct counterinsurgency operations on the scale required in Afghanistan and Iraq. Thus some field artillerymen must not only be trained in counterinsurgency tactics, techniques and procedures, but also in the skills of a different military occupation specialty—as infantrymen or military police, for example.

The Training Infrastructure

The requirement to train both individuals and units for counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, and to support training associated with the conversion of force structures to those more relevant for counterinsurgency operations, has strained a training infrastructure that is optimized to develop soldiers and units for conventional warfare. The Army's National Training Center (NTC), for example, was designed with conventional military operations in

mind. Neither the Army nor the Marine Corps has sufficient urban warfare training facilities to provide training for all those units who require it. Moreover, urban warfare training centers do not replicate the urban environment in its full form (e.g., dense concentrations of high-rise buildings, subterranean features like sewers and subways). Consequently, Army and Marine units cannot receive the kind of high-fidelity training in urban operations on a scale (i.e., brigade-level) comparable to that received at the NTC.

Regrettably, neither the Clinton nor Bush administrations took steps to create either a Joint National Training Center (JNTC) or a Joint Urban Warfare Training Center (JUWTC), as recommended by defense experts, including those on the National Defense Panel. This is important, as counterinsurgency warfare is typically protracted in nature. This means that US forces will likely find themselves engaged in this form of conflict for the better part of this decade, and perhaps a major part of the next. Thus the US military could benefit substantially from creating the necessary infrastructure to support high-fidelity counterinsurgency training.

To be sure, both the Army and Marine Corps are trying to adopt their training to prepare those Soldiers and Marines, and their units, for combat operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. For the most part, however, these efforts appear to be hastily organized. A more coherent, focused, long-term approach is needed to bring the US military's training infrastructure for irregular wars, like counterinsurgency, up to the standards of its conventional warfare training facilities, and to meet the dramatically increased demand for such training.

"Training For What?" The Role of Strategy

There is an old saying that units should "train the way they fight." This means that training should, to the maximum extent possible, present the individual Soldier or Marine, and their units, with a training environment as close as possible to that which they will encounter once deployed into the theater of operations. The US military takes this matter very seriously. Its high-fidelity training facilities are the world's finest, and have represented a source of enduring advantage for

[2] The Army was so intent on avoiding future "Vietnams" that, in wake of that conflict, General Creighton Abrams, then the chief of staff, restructured the force in such a way that large-scale, protracted deployments of combat forces required a call-up of the Reserves.

US forces. But most of these facilities were created during the Cold War, and reflect the demands of that era, not the one the military now confronts.

Moreover, "the way you fight" depends not only on the threat posed by the enemy. It also depends on the strategy chosen to achieve one's objectives. Once a strategy is adopted, war plans or campaign plans are developed to execute the strategy. Joint and Service doctrine at the operational level of war also comes into play. It represents an authoritative, approved way for accomplishing a task, be it organizing and running a convoy or conducting a campaign against insurgents.

Because counterinsurgency doctrine at the operational, or campaign level, of warfare languished in the US military in the three decades since the end of US involvement in the Vietnam War, the military does not have a well-honed doctrine for addressing such contingencies, especially at the operational level. This is important for training, as doctrine at the operational level of war sets the tasks that units (e.g., brigades, battalions) must be trained to accomplish. Importantly, operational doctrine also informs tactical doctrine—the tasks that small units and individual Soldiers and Marines must be prepared to accomplish.

For an example of how operational doctrine can influence individual and small unit training, consider the US military's experience during the Vietnam War. During the roughly two decades of significant US military involvement, a number of different operational concepts were put forth for defeating the communist insurgents. They included search and destroy operations; coastal enclaves; invading North Vietnam; and a variation on enclaves known as the Demographic Frontier. Each was interrelated in some form with efforts to provide security and rural development (roughly analogous to reconstruction efforts in Iraq). There were, as well, several different campaign concepts for pacification (e.g., Agrovilles, Strategic Hamlets, Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support, or CORDS). Thus the type of training program designed for individual Soldiers and Marines, and for units, small and large, will be influenced significantly by the strategy chosen to achieve US objectives, and the campaign plan developed to execute it.

In this vein, it is critical to have a clear sense of the strategy the US military is pursuing to defeat the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq. It cannot be overemphasized that tactical proficiency is no substitute for good strategy or effective doctrine at the operational level of war.

Avoiding the "Training Gap": Establishing a Sustainable Rotation Base and Unit Manning

The effectiveness of US Soldiers and Marines, and of their units, depends not only on training them for the mission at hand, but maintaining their training proficiency over time. This is particularly true in a protracted war.

Consider that insurgent forces in Afghanistan and Iraq do not rotate in and out of the theater of operations, as US units do. They may rest and refit themselves from time to time, but they are always in the theater of operations—and in insurgency warfare, there is no "rear area." This enables the insurgent force to accumulate skills in the best possible training environment: actual operations against counterinsurgent forces. Conversely, Army and Marine units deploy to Afghanistan and Iraq for a relatively brief period, "typically" from six months to a year. Then they rotate home. When they do, their skills begin to atrophy. Moreover, as time passes operations and tactics change as US and enemy forces try to gain an advantage. Thus not only do skills decline, they may become progressively less relevant. A "training gap" emerges between American troops and their adversaries, in favor of the latter.

At some point, these Soldiers and Marines may rotate back to Afghanistan or Iraq. If they are deployed back into the area where they were previously deployed, this training gap may be mitigated.

For this to happen, retention rates must remain high. For retention rates to remain high, a rotation base must be established that encourages high retention rates. At present, the rotation base for Army (in particular) and Marine forces deployed on hardship/combat tours appears woefully inadequate to sustain high retention rates. This could pose serious problems over time, both for US military effectiveness in Afghanistan and Iraq, and for the US military's training infrastructure. If, in this protracted conflict, the US military is not able to deploy units that

contain a significant number of veteran Soldiers and Marines, the training gap between them and their adversary may widen.[3] During the Vietnam War, when US forces had a high percentage of draftees in their ranks who were discharged after a few years' service, including one year in Vietnam, it was said that the United States military had "one year's worth of experience in Vietnam ten times over," whereas many of the communist guerrillas they confronted had a decade or more of experience. A similar phenomenon could occur in today's volunteer military if retention rates decline.

Should this occur, it will place greater stress on the military's training infrastructure to make up the difference. A training infrastructure optimized for conventional warfare will have to prepare a higher percentage of "green" troops for counterinsurgency warfare.

The implications for US military effectiveness could be striking. In the past, training at the Army's NTC, the Air Force's "Red Flag" exercises and the Navy's "Top Gun" training provided US service members with a competitive edge in combat, especially as they were often matched up against opponents with less experience and inferior training.

But things have changed. As noted, it is far from clear that the "training gap" will favor US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq over time. Nor can it be taken for granted that the US military's training infrastructure can be adapted quickly enough, and on a sufficient scale to make up for a substantial decline in Active and Reserve Component retention rates. Hence the need to establish a rotation base for the long haul.[4]

Of course, military effectiveness is a function of unit training as well as individual training. The effectiveness of unit operations might be enhanced, perhaps dramatically, if a major portion of its members remained together over successive deployments. There is some debate as to whether such "unit manning," as envisioned by the Army, actually produces greater unit cohesion, or that

[3] One reason this might *not* happen is if enemy insurgent forces are suffering severe casualties, or experiencing substantial defections. This could increase substantially the percentage of inexperienced insurgents in their ranks.
[4] Although retention is a function of myriad factors, it appears that, for the Active Component, a rotation ratio of 4:1 (e.g., maintaining four active brigades in order to keep one of them forward deployed at all times) and a Reserve Component ratio of 7:1 or 8:1 may suffice to maintain current retention rates. Unfortunately, moving to such rotation ratios would lead to a substantial decline in US troops available for duty in Afghanistan and Iraq.

the gains in unit cohesion are worth the costs of creating it. However, there would seem to be significant benefits to be derived from unit manning and rotation if, as part of the Army and Marine rotation sequences, units that had operated in a particular area of Afghanistan or Iraq returned to those same areas in their successive deployments.

"Soft" Training

Tactics are clearly important in military operations, and Soldiers and Marines must be tactically proficient in individual and small-unit training on tasks such as detecting and handling IEDs, conducting convoy operations, clearing urban structures, and manning checkpoints. But counterinsurgency training is even more challenging. Soldiers, Marines and small units must also be trained in unconventional, or at least traditionally peripheral, tasks that are not central to the "fire and maneuver" or "move, shoot and communicate" that form the core of conventional combat operations. These tasks include:

- Expressing an appreciation of cultural norms;
- Maintaining fire power restraint;
- Undertaking civic action with local government and civic leaders;
- Operating (and perhaps integrating) with local security forces; and
- Providing security and other forms of support to reconstruction efforts—domestic, American, and third party.

It is not clear how well individual Soldiers and Marines, or small units, can be "trained up" for these tasks prior to their deployment to the combat theater. Training in some skills may be relatively easy. There are, for example, ongoing programs to provide US forces with an appreciation of Afghan and Iraqi customs and cultural norms. Here in America, police training emphasizes restraint in the use of force. These techniques may be applied to train US troops in firepower restraint. On the other hand, US forces operating with local security forces can be

critical to an effective counterinsurgency campaign, as demonstrated by the Army's Special Forces in the Buon Enao program and the Marine Combined Action Platoons initiative in Vietnam. Yet other than personal experience, and relying on well-crafted "lessons learned" reports, it would seem difficult to conduct training in these types of tasks beyond basic military skills (e.g., patrolling). Similarly, building the necessary confidence among local leaders and the population in general, so as to promote civic action, enhance security, and thus win their "hearts and minds" is likely to be, at least in part, a function of US troops' "people skills," upon building up a level of trust that can only occur over time, and on the strategy and operations chosen.[5]

Summary

In conclusion, let me compliment the committee for raising the awareness of this important issue. We are confronted with insurgency warfare today in no small measure because of our military's dominance in conventional warfare. Insurgency is a form of warfare of the weak, not the strong. Yet the defeat of an insurgent movement typically comes only after a protracted period of conflict. Winning, to cite Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, will likely involve a "long, hard slog." This means we must move beyond the Services' immediate training fixes, helpful as they may be, to undertake to reform and restructure our training programs to address a form of warfare that has received all too little attention over the past few decades.

Finally, it is critical to note that improved training at the tactical level of warfare cannot make up for deficiencies in strategy and military doctrine.

[5] For example, a strategy that emphasizes periodic sweeps through an area is far less likely to provide the level of contact that "secure and hold" operations would. Familiarity can breed trust, as well as contempt. If the local population trusts coalition forces will provide it with security, it becomes easier to obtain the intelligence that is critical to defeating the insurgents. The choice between a strategy that emphasizes periodic sweeps and one that places high priority on sustained presence in an area could have a significant influence on the type of skills most needed in the force, and thus on what might constitute an optimal training program.